
U.S. Department of the Interior • U.S. Geological Survey

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BISMUTH IN SECOND QUARTER 1997

Total domestic consumption of bismuth in the second quarter of 1997 was 5% lower than in the first quarter. The largest decrease (12%) was in the chemicals sector; there was a small increase in the bismuth alloys sector. As compared with the second quarter of 1996, the total usage was less than 1% higher.

The Omaha, NE, lead refinery of ASARCO Incorporated had been scheduled to be closed by February 1998. Lead refining operations were stopped in June 1996, and bismuth recovery operations were to continue until the deadline; but they were shut down in June 1997 (ASARCO Incorporated, 1997). The Omaha plant was the last domestic source of primary bismuth.

The New York dealer price for bismuth, as published by Platt's Metals Week, began the quarter at \$3.20 per pound. It began increasing in April and started a sharp rise in May, reaching \$3.90 per pound by mid-June 1997, as supplies tightened. Mexico, Peru, and South Korea all stopped supplying the bismuth market just when trader activity had begun to pick up (Mining Journal, 1997a). The price fell back slightly to

\$3.88 per pound by the end of June.

The Defense Logistics Agency sold 106 metric tons of bismuth for \$795,000 on May 7, using the negotiated bid system. This completed the sale of the 136 metric tons authorized for fiscal year 1997. Therefore, no more bismuth will be available from the stockpile until October 1997 (Mining Journal, 1997b). Furthermore, the amount available for sale in fiscal year 1998 will be limited to 85 metric tons because that is the total inventory of bismuth remaining in the Defense National Stockpile.

References Cited

- ASARCO Incorporated, 1997, Annual Report 1996: New York, 45 p.
Mining Journal, 1997a, Minor metals in April: Mining Journal, v. 388, no. 8429, May 16, p. 399.
———1997b, Minor metals in May: Mining Journal, v. 388, no. 8432, June 6, p. 543.

TABLE 1
SALIENT BISMUTH STATISTICS 1/

(Kilograms, unless otherwise specified)

	1996 p/	1997		
		First quarter	Second quarter	Year to date
Consumption	1,520,000	387,000	367,000	754,000
Exports 2/	151,000	38,300	NA	NA
Imports for consumption	1,490,000	603,000	NA	NA
Price per pound, dealer, end of period	\$3.30	\$3.20	\$3.88	XX
Stocks, end of period, consumer	122,000	108,000	125,000	XX

p/ Preliminary. NA Not available.

1/ Data are rounded to three significant digits.

2/ Comprises bismuth metal and the bismuth content of alloys and waste and scrap.

TABLE 2
BISMUTH METAL CONSUMED IN THE UNITED STATES, BY USE 1/

(Kilograms)

Use	1996 p/	1997		
		First quarter	Second quarter	Year to date
Chemicals 2/	855,000	211,000	186,000	397,000
Bismuth alloys	401,000	108,000	114,000	222,000
Metallurgical additives	231,000	62,300	59,800	122,000
Other	35,000	6,000	6,000	12,000
Total	1,520,000	387,000	367,000	754,000

p/ Preliminary.

1/ Data are rounded to three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

2/ Includes industrial and laboratory chemicals, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals.

TABLE 3
U.S. IMPORTS FOR CONSUMPTION OF BISMUTH METAL, BY COUNTRY 1/

(Kilograms)

Country	1996	1997				
	Year total	March	First quarter	April	May	Year to date
Belgium	584,000	79,200	220,000	54,800	43,900	318,000
Canada	80,800	14,900	27,000	11,800	6,890	45,700
China	151,000	--	17,100	--	--	17,100
Germany	498	--	13	89	--	102
Hong Kong	15,800	--	--	--	--	--
Japan	1,680	--	--	--	--	--
Macao	--	--	20,000	--	--	20,000
Mexico	453,000	89,000	207,000	73,900	33,600	314,000
Peru	19,500	10,000	10,000	19,700	17,900	47,600
Spain	--	--	100	--	--	100
Switzerland	--	--	19	--	--	19
United Kingdom	189,000	23,800	102,000	22,900	30,100	155,000
Total	1,490,000	217,000	603,000	183,000	132,000	918,000

1/ Data are rounded to three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

Source: Bureau of the Census.

TABLE 4
U.S. EXPORTS OF BISMUTH METAL, ALLOYS, AND WASTE AND SCRAP, BY COUNTRY 1/

(Kilograms, metal content)

Country	1996	1997				
	Year total	March	First quarter	April	May	Year to date
Argentina	137	--	--	--	--	--
Australia	197	--	--	--	20	20
Belgium	65,500	--	--	--	--	--
Brazil	50	--	--	--	--	--
Canada	59,500	2,700	31,600	20,300	20,300	72,200
Dominican Republic	1,150	110	230	234	331	795
Finland	472	--	--	--	--	--
France	5,380	125	125	2,330	--	2,450
Germany	497	54	69	--	--	69
Grenada	--	--	--	--	717	717
Guatemala	14,200	--	--	--	--	--
Hong Kong	--	106	106	--	60	166
Ireland	227	325	1,020	281	--	1,310
Korea, Republic of	63	--	--	--	--	--
Malaysia	--	--	--	103	--	103
Mexico	51	--	102	--	--	102
Netherlands	209	--	4,980	--	--	4,980
Singapore	144	--	100	--	103	203
Switzerland	2,220	--	--	--	--	--
Taiwan	--	--	--	--	45	45
Thailand	45	--	--	--	--	--
United Kingdom	596	--	--	--	--	--
Total	151,000	3,420	38,300	23,200	21,600	83,100

1/ Data are rounded to three significant digits; may not add to totals shown.

Source: Bureau of the Census.